

Charles Owen
Chopsticks

arranged for xylophone soloist and percussion accompaniment
by Ralph Hicks



Chopsticks by Charles Owen, arranged by Ralph Hicks
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TSPCE-96

Program Notes

Chopsticks, originally written by Charles Owen in 1941, could possibly be the most fun you will ever have on a xylophone. It has all the energy and antics of the legendary Nexus novelty rag collection, with the symphonic, grandiose flair of the classic composers in a traditional theme and variations setting. “Charlie” was known for always focusing on the positive in life and making percussion fun. This certainly comes out in his treatment of *Chopsticks*, the only work in his vast library he chose to publish.

After presenting the traditional *Chopsticks* melody, Owen masterfully weaves the timeless classic through a waltz, a rhumba, a tango, a lento, an allegro, a galop, and finally a presto! Who knew *Chopsticks* would fit so perfectly over Franz Listz’s *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*?! This updated arrangement features accompaniment for marimba band and percussion and an optional xylophone cadenza giving this popular piece new life for another generation of percussionists to enjoy and share with their audiences.

Performance Notes

A crowd pleaser from start to finish, *Chopsticks* is full of opportunities to ham it up for the crowd! Consider having the ensemble stop and laugh at the wrong note in ms. 16? Or come down with motion sickness in the chromatic section at ms. 81. Sometimes a slight pause for dramatic effect or brief eye contact with the crowd is all you need to create a memorable moment!

This piece has the flexibility to be performed in the following configurations:

1. Xylophone solo **with piano** (No other percussionists necessary)
2. Xylophone solo **with traditional marimba band** (Marimba players 1-4 only)
3. Xylophone solo **with full percussion ensemble** (all parts except piano). Note: all percussion/timpani parts are designed as color embellishment and are not all necessary for the ensemble to function.

Marimba 1 and 2 can share a standard 4.3-octave (low A) marimba without any collisions. Marimba 3/4 can share a 4.5-octave (low F) marimba without collisions. If a 4.5-octave instrument isn’t available, these parts may still be accommodated on a 4.3-octave marimba by playing the notes in parentheses as substitutions for primary notes. Also, the Marimba 3/4 part(s) may be played by either two people, or by one player with four mallets.

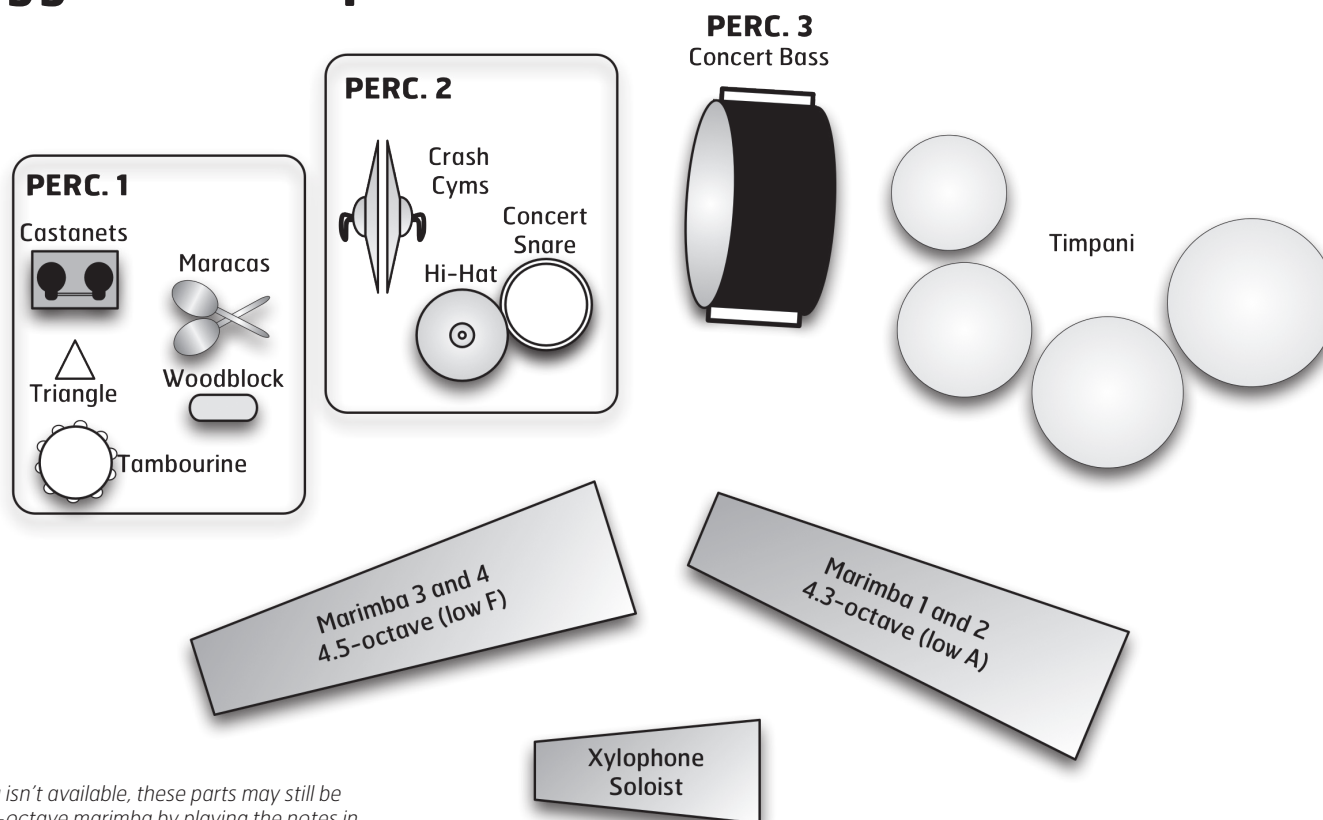
The most significant change in this arrangement comes with the addition of the cadenza. A traditional cadenza of Mr. Owen’s era would begin with expressive, rubato flair (up to the first two fermatas), get faster and faster (circular flourishes leading up to the forte), and build to a flurry of hands moving as fast as they possibly can (descending chromatic line)! However, feel free to jump straight from the lento into the allegro, as Owen’s original version intended; simply jump from the asterisk/double bar (at the end of ms. 119) directly to rehearsal F. Should you decide to give the cadenza a shot, go for broke!

Players and Instrumentation

Chopsticks may be played in a variety of configurations (see Performance Notes on previous page). For the full percussion ensemble version, it requires **9 players** with the following instrumentation:

1. **Xylophone**
2. **Marimba 1** shared 4.3-octave (low A)
3. **Marimba 2** shared 4.3-octave (low A)
4. **Marimba 3** shared 4.5-octave (low F)*
5. **Marimba 4** shared 4.5-octave (low F)*
6. **Percussion 1** - tambourine, castanets, woodblock, triangle, maracas
7. **Percussion 2** - snare drum, crash cymbals, hi-hat
8. **Percussion 3** - bass drum
9. **Timpani** - 4 drums

Suggested Setup



**If a 4.5-octave marimba isn't available, these parts may still be accommodated on a 4.3-octave marimba by playing the notes in parentheses as substitutions for primary notes.*

About the Composer

Excerpt courtesy of the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame records, originally written by Frederick D. Fairchild.

Charles Owen (1912–1985) had a distinguished career spanning 50 years as performer, educator, and overall well liked fellow. Born in Kinsman, Ohio, he received a Bachelor of Music degree from Catholic University, was a featured marimba soloist with the United States Marine Band in Washington for 20 years (1934–1954), Principal Percussionist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Professor of Percussion at Temple University (created the department), and Professor of Percussion at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

“Charlie will be remembered by all of us as a fine player and teacher, and to many of us as a good friend,” said Owen’s Philadelphia Orchestra colleague and friend, Alan Abel. “He was encouraging to students and colleagues alike. He had a wonderfully constructive approach to life—something we can all live by.”

As soloist for the U.S. Marine Band, Owen was often in the dual role of performer and arranger. He transcribed and arranged an extensive solo library for xylophone and marimba and performed across the country in concerts and on radio broadcasts. In 1941 Owen published one of his solos, *Chopsticks*.

“As a teacher, Charlie always stressed the making of music and the striving for perfection,” said Temple University graduate Glenn Steel. “Charlie did not just teach about music but about life itself. To him, percussion was great play, great fun, and I thank him for that.”

An active member of the Percussive Arts Society, Charles Owen served on its Board of Directors and was elected into the PAS Hall of Fame in 1981.

Level: Medium
Approx. playing time: 4'00"

Chopsticks

for xylophone soloist and percussion accompaniment

Charles Owen
arr. Ralph Hicks

In One, Freely ♩. = 66

Xylophone

Marimba 1
(shared w/M2)

Marimba 2
(shared w/M1)

Marimba 3/4
(shared)

Percussion 1
(shared w/P2)

Percussion 2
(shared w/P1)

Piano
(optional)

Sample
Image

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A Waltz

15

X

mp p

M1

p

M2

p

M3
M4

p

**Play notes in parentheses only if on a 4.3-octave marimba*

P1

BD/SD

P2
P3

p

T

p

Pno.

p

Sample Image

30

B

sim.

M1

M2

M3
M4

Tambourine

p
on rim

Sample Image

41

X

M1

M2

M3
M4

P1

P2
P3

T

Pno.

mf

mf

mf

f

Sample
Image

53

X

M1

M2

M3
M4

Sample Image

C

X

M1

M2

M3
M4

Woodblock

P1

P2
P3

T

Pno.

Sample
Image

76

X

* optional double strokes

M1

M2

M3
M4

Sample Image

D Rhumba ♩ = 152

Sample Image

The image displays a musical score for a Latin ensemble, featuring staves for X (Xylophone), M1 (Maracas), M2 (Hi Hat), M3 (Bass), and M4 (Drum). The score includes dynamics like *mf* and *f*, and a large watermark of a hand playing a maraca.

Sample Image

Tango ♩ = 120

accel.

109

X

M1

M2

M3
M4

Castane!

Sample Image

Sample Image

Xylophone Cadenza

rubato and expressive throughout cadenza

X 

[illegible]

Sample Image

F Allegro**poco accel.**"Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2"
by Franz Liszt

121

X

p *cresc. poco a poco* *8va*

M1

p *cresc. poco a poco*

M2

p *cresc. poco a poco*

M3
M4

p *cresc. poco a poco*

P1

Triangle

p *cresc. poco a poco*

P2
P3

p *cresc. poco a poco*

T

p *cresc. poco a poco*

Pno.

p *cresc. poco a poco*

on ... n

p

Sample
Image

[illegible]

Sample Image

*molto rall.***Presto**

155

X

M1

M2

M3
M4

The musical score is written for a piano and consists of five staves labeled X, M1, M2, M3, and M4. The tempo is initially marked *molto rall.* and then changes to **Presto**. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, trills, and dynamic markings (sfz, fp, f, ff). A large, faint watermark of a hand playing a piano is visible in the background.

Dynamic markings: *sfz*, *fp*, *f*, *ff*.

Trills: *tr*.

Sample
Image



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